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ABSTRACT

An instructional management system, called Response System with Variable Prescriptions (RSVP), is described in this report as it is used at Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC). Following introductory material, the relevance of such a system to current educational issues is explored and the use of computer technology in education is discussed. The RSVP system is then introduced, and its applications in subject area instruction, student advisement, and other areas are reviewed. The RSVP Feedback Program for Individualized Analysis of Writing is the focus of the remainder of the report. The program description indicates that the sequence of activities in the writing program includes the following: (1) students turn in writing assignments; (2) the instructor chooses a level of achievement represented by the writing sample; (3) the instructor identifies the errors which should be addressed; (4) the instructor makes comments on the writing sample; (5) the computer generates exercises and feedback to address the identified errors; and (6) the RSVP feedback letters are distributed in class with the assignments. Samples of student writing and the RSVP materials generated by the teacher and computer are provided. The report then presents results of a field test of the RSVP writing program and a discussion of how the writing program has been implemented with particular groups of students. A bibliography of literature on RSVP is followed by concluding remarks on the success and future of RSVP. (KL)

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AACJC POCKET READER: 2

TEACHING WRITING with the COMPUTER AS HELPER

by J. Terence Kelly
Vice President for Education

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Miami-Dade Community College

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JC 820 123

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Contents

Introduction	5
Educational Paradoxes	9
Computers in Education	12
Computer-Based Instruction Via RSVP	15
Applications of RSVP at Miami-Dade	17
The Feedback Program for Analysis of Writing	20
Follow-up Study of the RSVP Writing Program	41
Literature on RSVP	43
Concluding Comments	53
References	56

Introduction

In recent months educational reform at Miami-Dade Community College has caught the attention of the national media. Two major wire services, Associated Press and United Press International, have carried stories about Miami-Dade's efforts to improve the quality of its instructional program. Nationally distributed journals and magazines such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Community and Junior College Journal*, and *Change* magazine have also featured articles and commentaries on Miami-Dade's relentless pursuit of quality. The comprehensive plan for the change is of interest to some; the radical change and its relationship to the "open door" philosophy of community colleges intrigue others; and the reliance on the new forms of communications technology to implement, monitor, and manage the new parameters of the reform excites still others.

The purpose of this AACJC Pocket Reader is to describe in some detail one very small component of the technological applications that are being utilized to support thousands of underachieving students, superior students, and those in between. One of the most critical problems facing the community colleges, and in fact, colleges and universities in general, is a severe

lack of writing ability of college students. Over the history of American higher education, there have been endless instructional strategies applied to teaching and improving student writing.

At M-DCC, we believe that we have made a breakthrough in providing computer support for our English faculty in their efforts to teach students how to write. By relying on a sophisticated computerized system, much of the drudgery and repetitiveness, which English teachers have had to deal with in scoring students' essays, has been drastically reduced. This system, which was developed with the help of an Exxon Education Foundation grant, is serving thousands of students at Miami-Dade and other institutions.

With a genuine belief that what has been developed at Miami-Dade has promise toward partially solving one of the current deficiencies in the nation's educational outcomes — the lack of adequate writing skills — the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges selected "Computers and Writing" as an early topic in the Pocket Reader series. In order to help the readers to better understand the context in which this system is being used, we feel that it is necessary to provide some background information about computers and education and the computer system at Miami-Dade in particular and its varied uses.

J. Terence Kelly and

Kamala Anandam

AACJC POCKET READER

9

Educational Paradoxes

In the past decade, external forces — political and social — have caused serious dilemmas for colleges and universities. In the face of shrinking clientele, diminishing finances, and declining public confidence, there have been debates about selective versus open-door admission, increased enrollment versus retention of students, traditional versus non-traditional education, and education for all versus education for each. The pendulum swings from one end to the other as institutions adjust strategies in order to ensure their continued existence amidst a multitude of constraints.

The tug between survival and quality is accentuated by the declining skills in college graduates; forces, equally expressive, are pulling colleges and universities in opposite directions.

On the one side there is a rising momentum to return to the traditional, to tighten standards, to retreat to the basic college program, to weed out the underachievers, to return to more conventional methods of teaching, and to reestablish the "true" value of letter grades.

On the other side is the thrust to move education farther and farther away from the traditional. Many loosely labeled "non-traditional" programs are finding their ways onto the college scene. The movement is characterized by the availability of

external degrees, universities without walls, competency-based curriculums, and experiential and open-learning programs.

Increasing numbers of people from diverse backgrounds who want college education have provided the impetus for this movement. Minority groups, senior citizens, part-time students, and other groups are forcing the expansion of new modes of instruction — new adventures in learning that rely heavily on media resources and other sophisticated forms of technology.

Amidst these paradoxes, Miami-Dade Community College has developed an instructional management system known as RSVP, *R*esponse *S*ystem with *V*ariable *P*rescriptions, which can comfortably accommodate the needs of survival and quality, and traditional and non-traditional approaches. The use of this system at Miami-Dade is an attempt to maximize learning, to enhance instructional support services, to assist faculty in record-keeping and course-management, and to serve the students in a more humane way for either "closed" on-campus classes or "open" classes off-campus.

The general objective of the faculty to individualize teaching is consistent with the capacity of computers to do the same thing for large and diverse numbers of students. Research at Miami-Dade shows that not only can faculty and computer-based instructional management systems co-exist, but that they can actually enhance a teaching-learning process. Others may benefit from information about the use of the computer to maximize instruction, enable the faculty to be less encumbered with course details, and to become more directly influential in the teaching-learning process.

Computers in Education

Education, most would agree, should at some point encompass an interactive human process. To many, learning by machine represents a dehumanizing process. Writers tend to reflect two extreme points of view.

One view is that computers have no useful purpose in instruction; the other advocates that use of the technology is "the panacea that will enable colleges and universities to individualize instruction and cut costs as well." (Levien, p. xix)

Thus, either committed proponents or enraged opponents are writing on the subject. Obviously, there is room for both camps to move toward a tolerable compromise. In fact, recent developments in education bear out what John G. Kemeny foresaw in 1972, namely, that the desire in teachers to individualize instruction and the potential in computer technology to accommodate instructional needs have reached such heights that an encounter between the two was inevitable. Perhaps the advantage of relying on computers is reflected objectively by Richard L. Ferguson as follows:

> Attempts at individualization in conventional classroom environments by the most imaginative of teachers are likely to lead to at best modest success and at worst nervous

> frustration. . . . If learning specialists and psychologists can determine the variables which represent the best input for making wise decisions, then a computer can be programmed to perform the task which a single teacher would no doubt find impossible to manage.

What can computers bring to the partnership in teaching? Computers offer their incredible capacities for speed, memory, reliability, patience, and obedience. Moreover, as David Reisman once pointed out, computers have a marked advantage of minimizing prejudices of students and teachers, which can block effective learning. In this sense, the impersonalization imposed by computers in the instructional process has an equalizing effect on diverse human beings.

Computers naturally accept no responsibility for decision-making, which is a human activity. Faculty are equipped to handle the complex process of speculating and confirming, searching and experimenting, and analyzing and concluding. In teaching, instructors constantly and continuously make decisions, but a computer is faster, far less forgetful, and even less inconsistent. Instructors are pleasantly patient if they have to point out repeated errors in the assignments of a few students, but beyond that their patience may grow thin.

What, then, gives the most promise for a harmonious and productive relationship among the teacher, the student, and the machine? Computer technology moves in somewhat mysterious ways. The hardware explosion is years ahead of the

software and human development; yet, without the latter, the potentials of the hardware remain unrealized.

Over this last decade Miami-Dade has tried to facilitate and promote faculty development in the use of computers for education. A satisfactory mix of teacher and technology in the learning process has been created.

14

Computer-Based Instruction Via RSVP

In a traditional sense, instructors generally provide some information to their students through assigned readings, films, videotapes, audiotapes, lectures, and/or in-class experiences. The instructor thus initiates the first part of the dialogue and then prompts the response by asking questions, assigning work, leading discussions, or giving a test. Other means of imparting information and stimulating responses may be used. None of these activities needs to change or yield when the use of the computer for instruction is contemplated.

The RSVP system accommodates both classroom instruction and independent study, and the curriculum designs that incorporate such concepts as programmed learning, diagnostic and prescriptive teaching, performance-based curricula, criterion-referenced evaluation, and modular teaching are enhanced by the use of RSVP. As a content- and context-free system, RSVP can be programmed to cater to any mode of instruction, size of enrollment, level of education, and kind of time frame. This flexibility is perhaps its most striking feature, allowing the creativity of faculty to emerge and guiding them to become organized and systematic in instructional planning and delivery.

The teacher is rightfully the pivotal person to initiate and maintain viable feedback through RSVP. Once an instructor prepares the prescriptions and instructions, the monitoring of student responses requires relatively less time than would a similar number of face-to-face dialogues, thus permitting the instructor to interact with individuals or groups of students at any point in the dynamic process.

Although the RSVP computer system has the potential to individualize instruction, it must be activated by the mind of the instructor. He or she must:

1) select instructionally useful "attribute" and "performance" information;
2) instruct the RSVP system to store the selected pieces of information;
3) combine the pieces of stored information in the form of commands; and
4) provide the varied prescriptions in order to allow the RSVP system to print differential letters to students.

The degree of individualization that can be achieved through the system is limited only by the imagination of the instructor to conceptualize the potential for variations within the system and to activate the system for implementation.

Applications of RSVP At Miami-Dade

From 1971 to 1981, RSVP has grown in several ways: Its capacities have increased, its complexities have expanded, its versatility has widened, and its users have grown in number. None of these developments has been earth-shaking. Quite the contrary, the growth has seemed steady but slow.

But it is the *steady* growth that speaks well for RSVP and all its proponents. In the early years, RSVP's crawling stage was so long that it sometimes appeared that it would never stand up on its own; however, that stage — call it incubation period — has been absolutely necessary for solid and long-lasting growth.

Beginning with one course offered through Open College (Miami-Dade's option for off-campus learners), RSVP now serves students and faculty on all four campuses. The applications of RSVP to the various courses and programs differ so significantly from one to another that it is hard to realize that all have arisen from the same system.

College-wide, for instance, RSVP is informing new and continuing students of their academic progress at Miami-Dade midway into each term (Academic Alert and Advisement). At mid-term, all faculty members provide information about

their students' progress and attendance. This information, combined with other information — credit load, previous performance, ethnic affiliatioo, native language, age, basic skills test scores extracted from the college registration system — provides a computer data-base to generate highly personalized reports to approximately 45,000 students enrolled at Miami-Dade. Out of a pool of stored messages, RSVP selects those appropriate to each student. The possible combinations of the messages could result in as many as 26,878 unique letters to students.

RSVP takes on a different role in the division of telecourses. It responds to students' answers to multiple-choice questions in courses such as Principles of Business; Human Growth and Development; Death Attitudes & Life Affirmation; Business Law; Earth, Sea, & Sky; Contemporary Health Issues; The Art of Being Human; The Living Environment; The Ascent of Man; General Education Mathematics; Optimal Self-Development; and Introduction to Oceanography. Since its first course in winter term 1971-72, this division has served approximately 31,000 students io distance learning in 25 different courses.

For on-campus classes, RSVP has provided individualized prescriptive feedback to students in anatomy, economics, social science, general education math, freshman composition, and student development. In laboratories and learning centers, RSVP generates study guides and instructional feedback in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Other interesting applications include RSVP NURSELECT, which evaluates and informs all applicants to the Associate Degree Nursing Program; Health Analysis and Improvement, a course in which students receive individualized fitness programs; Student Information Profile, in which RSVP sends personal letters about special needs of handicapped students to their instructors; and an honors recruitment system in which RSVP informs superior students about the "Emphasis on Excellence" program at Miami-Dade.

Thus, in classrooms and labs, in basic-skills courses and electives, RSVP has become a useful tool for individualizing instruction and advisement, and its use continues to expand as the faculty and advisors at Miami-Dade seek computer support term after term. At this point, it is highly unlikely that any Miami-Dade student will pass through a program of study without being touched in some way by RSVP.

The Feedback Program for Analysis of Writing

Another uniquely created application of the system is the RSVP Feedback Program for Individualized Analysis of Writing that was developed over a period of one year under an Exxon Education Foundation grant. Based on a survey of more than 200 sources prepared specifically for this project (Serena and Newman, 1978), the RSVP Feedback Program in writing stresses the need for: 1) practice of writing without the threat of being graded; 2) use of positive reinforcement; 3) selective evaluation of students' errors; and 4) timeliness of feedback for subsequent writing. The development, review, and revision of the feedback program for writing involved 35 English instructors from five community colleges and two universities.

The instructors who use the feedback program may select their own textbooks, teaching methods, and grading policies. The program supports instructors who teach composition courses or any other courses in which students are expected to write. Strategies involving group instruction, peer tutoring, and audio-visual instructor conferences are served equally by the RSVP Feedback Program in writing.

The flow of activities in this program is presented in Figure 1 and comprises the following:

1) Students write.
2) Instructors read each essay as a whole and choose a level (A, B, or C) — A representing the basic level of feedback written at the seventh-grade level, B representing the intermediate or ninth-grade reading level, and C representing the superior eleventh-grade reading level.
3) Instructors examine each essay analytically and select the errors needing prescriptions (not more than five at a time is the recommended number).
4) a. Instructors mark a computer readable form for the selected prescriptions.
   b. Instructors make written comments on those essays they think require them.
5) Instructors enter the forms for computer processing.
6) Instructors distribute the RSVP letters to the students along with their essays.

A student's typical essay that was graded by a faculty member follows Figure 1. Conventionally, this is what the student would receive as feedback from the instructor. In contrast, with the RSVP system, the student receives a detailed feedback report as shown. This report is generated on the basis of a computer readable form completed by the instructor, also shown here.

Class Writing #1
My Favorite Sport

For two years in high school, I was on the water polo and swimming team. In water polo season, we would have drills on handling the ball with separate hands. We would also have drills on doing egg-beaters in the water. At the water polo games, both opponents would be a defensive man or an offensive man, depending on which team has the ball.

In swimming season, you would want to keep swimming those laps, because it was winter-time, and you would be cold if you didn't keep your pace up. Our coach would make us swim a 500-yard swim in ten minutes. The hard part is swimming three or four

Is this one team that does both water polo & swimming? or two teams?

when is that?

Unless you can assume that your audience will understand this, you should explain these two maneuvers.

shift in tense

when is this? or

outdoor pool? or indoor pool but unheated?

one topic

500-yard swims at a time. My favorite stroke is backstroke. My weakest stroke is breaststroke. The stroke ~~where you become tired~~ in is the butterfly stroke.

// give detail

// explain

that tires you

another topic

In my opinion, swimming meets are exciting, that is if more people would show up to watch them. I think swimmers should be more recognized

another topic

than football players in high school. My reason is that swimmers work out in cold water, in the wintertime, and sometimes in the morning before dawn. I hope I'm not sounding prejudice, but

sp.

awkward phrasing

swimmers don't get enough credit for being active in more than one sport, which is water polo.

I understand that you are talking about water sports, and I'm glad they are important to you. However, in order to present your feelings and ideas effectively you need to work on organizing your material more clearly so that your main thesis and your supporting ideas will stand out. The material I'm giving you to read should help you understand how you could improve the areas I've marked in this paper.

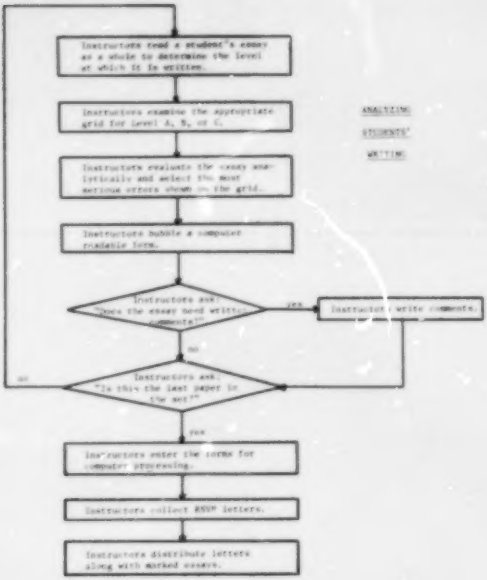

Instructors read a student's essay as a whole to determine the level at which it is written.
Instructors examine the appropriate grid for Level A, B, or C.
Instructors evaluate the essay analytically and select the most serious errors shown on the grid.
Instructors bubble a computer readable form.
Instructors ask: "Does the essay need written comments?"
yes
Instructors write comments.
no
Instructors ask: "Is this the last paper in the set?"
no
yes
Instructors enter the forms for computer processing.
Instructors collect RSVP letters.
Instructors distribute letters along with marked essays.
ANALYZING STUDENTS' WRITING

Figure 1. Flow of activities in the RSVP Feedback Program for Writing

INDIVIDUALIZED ANALYSIS OF WRITING
MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Assignment 1
Jan. 11, 1980

Student #: 0000020

The name and address
of the student have been
removed intentionally.

Dear Student:

Thank you for turning in Assignment 1.

Below are some comments I am having you read to help you see ways to improve your writing.

Verb Usage: Shift in Tense

Verbs change in form to show the time (tense) of their action. Read the following paragraph:

Emilio was interested in the stars. At night he set his telescope in the yard. First, he pointed it toward the North star. Then he looked at the surrounding stars. Finally, he picked out one group and studied it.

The verbs "was interested," "set," "pointed," "looked," "picked," and "studied" describe Emilio's actions and show that they all happened in the past. Since the time is the same for each action, the tense (time) of the verbs (words used to express the actions) is the same. It is the past tense. Verb tense indicates the time of the action.

Actions that take place at the same time are always in the same tense.

As he walks (present), he eats (present) a candy bar.
As he walked (past), he ate (past) a candy bar.

When an action happens at a different time from other actions, you use a different tense. Read the paragraph below.

Maggie now works in a food store. She bags groceries. Before she got this job, she delivered newspapers. She quit the newspaper route because she had to get up too early in the morning.

The first two sentences in the paragraph are in the present tense because they describe Maggie's life now. The last two sentences describe actions that took place in the past, so the verbs "got," "delivered," "quit," and "had" are in the past tense.

Unity and Coherence: Lack of Consistent Ordering of General and Specific Ideas

In a paragraph you should use one main generalization (usually called the topic sentence). This generalization tells the reader what the rest of the paragraph is about. Because the topic sentence (central idea) is general, the other sentences must directly support and develop that sentence. Use developmental sentences that are as specific and concrete as possible.

Read the following paragraph. Notice the use of specific and concrete language.

> Camping in South Florida is not always fun. First of all, the campers usually prefer to wait until the dry season. At that time, there are fewer mosquitoes to nip red-blooded victims. When the best time finally does arrive, the eager campers have to get ready. They must collect their tent equipment — pots and pans, canned food, fishing gear, and clothing. Next these outdoorsmen have to find a camping site that is relatively free of ants, snakes, and rocks. When they finally get their campfire burning, they have to watch

it carefully because the area is now so dry. Finally, someone has to do the sticky, boring, and dirty job of scaling the catch of the day before it can be cooked or scorched over an uncertain fire. Even though campers remain eager to camp, camping in South Florida could tax the endurance of even a career Marine sergeant.

Method of Development:
Inadequate Use of Details, Facts, Statistics

The central idea (topic sentence) of your paragraph should be supported and developed by the other sentences. One way to support your topic sentence is with details, facts, or statistics. Look at how the following paragraph uses this method of development:

Topic Sentence: Last week, I witnessed an automobile accident, which is still on my mind.

Example of development with details:
Long after the wrecked cars were towed away and the broken glass was swept up, witnesses remained, talking among themselves.

Example of development with a fact:
The European compact skidded fifty yards, from the corner of Palm Drive to Collins Avenue.

Example of development with a statistic:
In the last year, ten accidents have occurred at the same location.

Note: When you use details, facts, or statistics to support your topic sentence, make sure the information is accurate and based upon reliable sources.

Lack of Central/Main Idea

A paragraph is written to discuss a central (main) idea. Wherever the central idea comes in the paragraph, it is expressed in a topic sentence. An effective central idea has a limited subject. It also conveys a clear attitude toward the subject.

The attitude in the central idea shows the reader quickly and easily how the subject will be developed. The attitude requires some discussion, explanation, development, or support to be understood. It is explained in some major or minor way by each of the other sentences in the paragraph. Therefore, it is the most important sentence in the entire paragraph.

Read the above independent paragraph that explains the purpose of the attitude and ask yourself these questions: Which sentence states what the paragraph is mainly about? How do the other sentences explain that central idea clearly and fully?

After you write your paragraph, ask yourself these questions about it. Which sentence states what the paragraph is mainly about? Do the other sentences develop that central idea clearly and fully? Take out any sentences that do not answer "yes" to the second question. If you follow these steps, you should be able to write effective paragraphs.

I look forward to seeing your next assignment. Keep writing and writing, because improvement comes only with practice.

Sincerely,

The Faculty Member's Name
has been removed intentionally.

In presenting these illustrations, no claims are made that the three levels of feedback are all-inclusive, only that they cover the most common, definable elements of standard written English. In varying degrees from skill area to skill area, and level to level, the prescriptions were designed:

1) to emphasize the problems in communication faced by a reader who confronts language that has been used without knowledge of conventions.
2) to present correct models, drawn from familiar events and activities, rather than examples of errors.
3) to provide acceptable alternate ways of expression that depend upon the intention of the writer.
4) to expose students to well-written paragraphs, whenever feasible, rather than a series of unrelated sentences.
5) to empathize with the difficulties students may be facing in improving their writing.
6) to avoid technical terms as much as possible.
7) to offer suggestions on how to avoid a recurrence of errors.

Instructors can use RSVP for as many assignments and students as they wish. The system is programmed to track the number of assignments processed and the levels and skill areas of prescriptions requested for each student; this data specifies prescriptions requested for the first, second, and third times. Thus, the RSVP system maintains a cumulative record that enables it to provide teachers with a status report for each student.

This application of RSVP is a winning feature with faculty because it saves them time in record keeping and in clear status reporting. A page from an instructor's rollbook and an RSVP status report are illustrated to show this contrast.

INSTITUTION _____ STUDENT NUMBER

CAMPUS _____

NAME _____

COURSE _____

SEQUENCE NUMBER _____

TERM _____ YEAR _____

ASSIGNMENT NUMBER

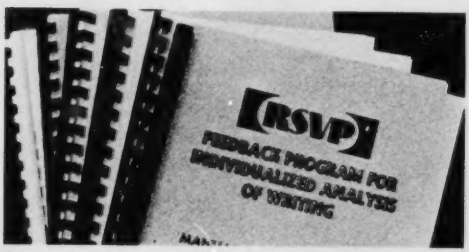
[RSVP]

LEVEL A GRID

RSVP FEEDBACK PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALIZED ANALYSIS OF WRITING

DESIGNED BY
MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SKILL AREA	CLASSIFICATION WITHIN SKILL AREA	
1. LEVEL OF PRESCRIPTION	Level A (IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO BUBBLE THE LEVEL ON THIS SHEET. THE FORM IS MEANT ONLY FOR LEVEL A.)	
2. POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT	1. Content shows promise 2. Well organized 3. Well expressed 4. Few mechanical errors 5. Encouragement for continued effort 6. Overall good paper 1,2,3 combined	
3. FRAGMENT	1. Dependent or subordinate clause used as a sentence 2. Verbal phrase used as a sentence 3. Omission of subject or verb	
4. FUSION SENTENCE	1. Comma splice 2. Omission of comma between sentences 3. Run-on	
5. SUBJECT / VERB AGREEMENT	1. Singular subject / plural verb, plural subject / singular verb	
6. VERB USAGE	1. Shift in tense 2. Corrected verb - omission of "ed" ending 3. Misuse of principal parts of irregular verbs 4. Misuse of principal parts of irregular verb "to be"	
7. PRONOUN	1. Vague reference 2. Misuse of reflexive, reciprocal pronouns 3. Shift 4. Misuse of nominative and objective cases	
8. PUNCTUATION	1. Omission of end punctuation 2. Misuse of comma 3. Misuse or omission of apostrophe for possession 4. Misuse or omission of punctuation in connections	
9. CAPITALIZATION	1. Lack of capitalization 2. Misuse of capitalization	
10. SPELLING	1. Rule-related errors 2. Errors related to mispronunciation 3. Incorrect separation or combining of words	
11. DICTION	1. Wrong word choice 2. Incorrect words 3. Too informal 4. Inappropriate formation of word plurals 5. Commonly confused words	
12. SYNTAX	1. Inversions 2. Negatives 3. Adverbial modifiers	
13. UNITY AND COHERENCE	1. Lack of transitions 2. Lack of connective material of pointer and specific data 3. Digressions 4. Lack of time order 5. Spatial disorganization / lack order	
14. METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT	1. Inadequate use of examples, illustrations 2. Inadequate use of reasons 3. Inadequate use of cause and effect 4. Inadequate use of comparison / contrast 5. Inadequate use of division, form, definition	
15. GENERAL NOTATION	1. Too broad for development 2. Lack of interest / main idea 3. Unorganized approach 4. Lack of primary support, opinion	



Individualized Analysis of Writing
Miami-Dade Community College

Status Report Student #: 0000003

Dear Student:

Based on my evaluation of your assignments, I would like to give you a report on your present status in this writing class. So far you have turned in:

Assignment 1 — Basic Feedback
Assignment 2 — Basic Feedback
Assignment 3 — Basic Feedback
Assignment 4 — Detailed Feedback
Assignment 5 — Detailed Feedback
Assignment 6 — Detailed Feedback
Assignment 7 — Integrated Feedback
Assignment 8 — Integrated Feedback

I would like you to pay particular attention to the following area(s):

Basic Feedback

Fused sentence: Comma splice — misuse of comma between sentences
Punctuation: Misuse or omission of apostrophe in contractions
Spelling: Rule-related errors
Diction: Commonly confused words
Unity and coherence: Digressions
Method of development: Lack of details, facts, statistics

Detailed Feedback

Fragment: Dependent or subordinate clause used as a sentence
Pronoun: Lack of agreement with antecedent
Unnecessary use of comma
Diction: Problem with connotation
Method of development: Inadequate use of comparison/contrast
Modifier: Dangling
Stringy sentences — overcoordination
Inadequate introductory paragraph

Integrated Feedback

Fragment
Verb usage: Ineffective use of voice
Sentence: Faulty modification
Style: Inappropriate tone
Narrative: Problems with such elements as point of view, tense, pace

Persuasive argument: Problems with such elements as examples, stance, diction

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You seem to be continuing to have difficulty in the following area(s):

Basic Feedback

Subject/verb agreement

In the following area(s), this is the third time you have had difficulty, so I recommend that you see me with this letter for additional help:

Basic Feedback

Fragment: Dependent or subordinate clause used as a sentence

If you have any questions about this status report, or if you need further information about any comments I have given you to read so far, I will be happy to try to help you.

Sincerely,

The Faculty Member's Name
has been removed intentionally.

Evaluation of the RSVP Writing Program

The RSVP Feedback Program for Individualized Analysis of Writing was field tested for one term by nine faculty from five community colleges. All nine faculty used the program in writing for one section of a course; three taught at the developmental writing level and the remaining at the freshman composition level; and seven of the faculty taught another section of the same course without using RSVP. The instructors volunteered to try the RSVP feedback program in writing, and their two sections were randomly designated as RSVP and non-RSVP groups.

Several criteria were considered in the selection of tests for the study — their suitability, their validity and reliability, their cost, the ease of and the time needed for their administration, their scope of measuring variability in students' writing abilities. The tests selected, which met most of the criteria, were: 1) one objective test — "Comparative Guidance and Placement Program: Written English Expression" (WEE) test (Educational Testing Service, 1972) and 2) one essay test for use in all classes.

A general attitude questionnaire was administered at the end of the experiment to the students in all classes. The questionnaire, locally constructed, consisted of 39 questions representing

two attitudes: one toward writing (13 items) and one toward the class (26 items).

In addition to the student general attitude questionnaire, RSVP attitude questionnaires consisting of 19 items and 28 items, respectively, were administered at the end of the experiment to the students and instructors in the RSVP groups. These questionnaires also were locally constructed. Both the General and RSVP Attitude questionnaires were checked for internal consistency with Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

Five out of nine instructors who used the program felt highly positive about it and saw benefits for themselves and their students, while two expressed mixed emotions and two felt more negative than positive. Contrary to the popular belief that computers are impersonal, the instructors found that RSVP helped to personalize instruction. Such positive instructor attitude, despite the rigorous requirements of an experimental study and the newness of computer-related activities, endorses the concept of the instructor-computer partnership for individualizing instruction. Instructors pointed to the systematic approach to instruction as the pay-off in using RSVP. Since the completion of the experimental study, the RSVP Feedback Program in writing has continued to be used by an increasing number of instructors.

From the perspective of students, the RSVP Feedback Program in writing is claimed to be positive, helpful, and personalized — responses similar to those that have been received from students in other Miami-Dade courses using

RSVP. Students single out personalization as the dominant positive feature.

Thus, the RSVP Feedback Program in writing seems to have earned student and some instructor acceptance in the experimental study, and to have made a significant contribution in breaking down human resistance to the machines. Over a two and one-half year period ending in July, 1981, for example, 32 faculty members have used the program to reach almost 2,800 students enrolled in freshman composition or remedial writing classes. Further, RSVP has processed faculty analyses of 6,231 essays written by the students and provided 16,038 prescriptions.

In terms of learning effectiveness, a significant difference between RSVP and non-RSVP groups in the field test was observed in the objective test, "Comparative Guidance and Placement Program: Written English Expression" test. The impact of instruction also should be evident in the students' writing. Holistic scoring provides an effective method of evaluating writing as a whole.

Experienced raters at the Educational Testing Service read the pre and post treatment essays of all the students in the experimental and controlled groups and scored them holistically. The results of the experimental study revealed that such scoring did not turn up any signficant improvement in students' writing across the board or a difference between the RSVP and non-RSVP groups.

As a support system for various configurations of teaching strategies and curriculum materials, the RSVP Feedback Program in writing is intended

to give individualized feedback in definable aspects of writing — punctuation, grammar, and diction. Holistic scoring, on the other hand, spans areas that the total instructional activities are intended to cover, although not necessarily addressed by the RSVP Feedback Program in writing.

While there was a significant difference between the RSVP and the non-RSVP groups on the WEE test, there was no significant difference in the holistic scores that represented "whole" writing. In other words, the RSVP Feedback Program in writing accomplished what it was expected to do, nothing more and nothing less. However, there is no reason why the creative minds of English faculty cannot conceive of a plan to use RSVP to address other areas of concern in writing. This challenge is perhaps the most exciting feature of RSVP — to explore the yet untapped capabilities of the system.

Follow-up Study of the RSVP Writing Program

Now that the RSVP writing program has become more familiar to faculty members, it is important to know how they have implemented the system for particular groups of students whose attributes—native language, ethnicity, assessment scores—are stored in Miami-Dade's Master Student Records and are accessible to RSVP. For instance, do Spanish-speaking students receive different prescriptions than do English-speaking students? Do the findings differ from one feedback level to another? What might the answers signify?

Interesting trends were uncovered in 1,200 assignments processed two-thirds of the way into one major term for approximately 500 students. Out of the 1,200 assignments, 242 were placed at the basic level of feedback. At this level, the five most frequently chosen skill areas were (in order from first place to fifth): (1) fused sentence, (2) punctuation, (3) fragment, (4) verb usage, and (5) diction. What is interesting is that these skill areas were selected in this order of priority for all students at this level, regardless of whether they were Spanish speakers, English speakers, above the English cut-off, or below it.

The similarity found across groups of assignments was the same for the intermediate level of

feedback, although, as might be expected, the most frequently used prescriptions here dealt with matters of diction, organization of ideas, and spelling; the one notable exception to this pattern was in the area of "fused sentence," which surfaced in the top five skill areas for Spanish speakers and those below the English cut-off, but not for the other two groups. The trend of similarity across groups repeated itself at the superior level of feedback, where more options for positive reinforcement are available.

This statistical analysis shows the capacities of RSVP to provide valuable information that can assist in improving instruction because, if nothing else, it points out the largest number of students who experience similar difficulties. Usually, English teachers have relied on intuitive inferences rather than on quantitative analysis to determine the areas of instruction that require greater concentration.

Literature on RSVP

Many more applications of RSVP have been developed by Miami-Dade Community College. The following document, prepared for the 10th anniversary of RSVP, contains a list of materials, available upon request, that cover some additional applications.

Table of Contents of RSVP — Applications of a Computer System for Individualizing Instruction and Advisement

A. Instruction

Student Instructional Applications: Model I

The Art of Being Human (HUM 2570z)
A television course that introduces the student to humanistic experience in the arts and philosophy as a permanent resource for living

Death Attitudes and Life Affirmation (DEP 2481z): Open College
A radio course that is a study of mortality, its psychological and social consequences, and the problems it poses for modern Americans

Optimal Self-Development (STD 1108z & STD 1108)

A radio and audiovisual course that is designed to enable students to clarify their feelings, needs, values, and purposes in order to facilitate their personal and social development

Interdisciplinary Science: The Ascent of Man (IDS 1190z)

An independent-study course that traces major cultural events arising from the biological and social evolution of humans through their scientific discoveries and inventions

Business Law (BUL 2111z)

A radio course that introduces students to the rights, obligations, and duties of persons taking part in business transactions

General Education Earth Science (GLY 1000z)

A television course that is a survey of astronomy, meteorology, climatology, oceanography, and geology and that stresses the scientific method and the enhancement of the powers of observation and interpretation

Human Growth and Development (DEP 2000z)

A television course that looks at how humans grow and develop from conception through old age by examining the interplay of biological factors, human interaction, and cultural forces on the psychological development of humans

Introduction to Psychology (PSY 2012z)

A television course that blends classic materials with the most recent developments in psychological theory in order to provide an understanding of human behavior as a natural phenomenon subject to scientific study

Anatomy and Physiology Lab (APB 2190L/2191L)

An audio-tutorial lab setting that is used to instruct students in health-related fields of study by presenting material in units of organ systems

General Education Mathematics (MGF 2113)

A course designated primarily for liberal arts majors who wish to cover the uses and applications of mathematics in real life experiences and as a means for understanding and analyzing daily events

Human Growth and Development (DEP 2000)

A course that includes important theoretical models of human development and such topics as genetics, learning, intelligence, socialization, personality, sex-role identification, language acquisition, and moral development

Learning Media Center Mathematics (MAT 1992)

A course that teaches basic math skills for credit, but with no scheduled class time, and that uses a variety of print and nonprint instructional materials.

Student Instructional Applications: Model II

RSVP Feedback Program for Individualized Analysis of Writing: College-wide

A program that functions independently of textbook selection and instructional resources, strategies, and settings and is designed to provide students with feedback about their writing strengths and weaknesses

English Composition (ENC 1130z)

A course that emphasizes the techniques of expository prose by reviewing basic writing skills and showing students how to shape a thesis, plan a composition, and develop an effective writing style

Student Instructional Applications: Model III

Reading Skills Lab (REA 1992)

A learning support services course designed to help students improve their skills in twenty-eight objectives related to reading

Developmental Studies Reading (REA 1992)

A classroom and lab course designed to help students improve their skills in a sequentially arranged hierarchy of reading objectives

Writing Lesson Selection (ENC 1992)

A developmental studies course designed to help students improve their skills in sixty objectives related to writing

Developmental Studies Mathematics (MAT 1992)

A developmental studies course designed to help students improve their skills in six major mathematics modules

Mathematics Learning Center

A program for arithmetic, introductory and intermediate algebra, and trigonometry that uses a combination of print and non-print materials

Social Science Resource Center

A learning support service that offers quiet areas for study, class notes from instructors, books and articles on a variety of social science topics, peer teachers to help with difficulties, and audiovisual materials to augment the lectures

Faculty Instructional Applications

Developmental Studies Mathematics (MAT 1992)

A developmental studies course designed to help students improve their skills in six major mathematics modules

Student Service Information Profile

A program designed to provide information about the disabilities, limitations, abilities, and academic needs of handicapped students to their instructors prior to the start of each term

B. Advisement

Academic Alert and Advisement System

A system designed to alert and advise 40,000 credit students about their progress

and attendance midway into every major term

Health Analysis and Improvement (HLP 1010)
A course designed to assess students' physical fitness levels and place them in individualized health and fitness programs

RSVP Faculty Data Bank
A program designed to maintain a bank of information on the work-related and recreational activities of Miami-Dade's North Campus faculty/staff

RSVP Nurselect

A program designed to select students by pre-established criteria for the Associate Degree Nursing Program and inform them of their admission status

Respiratory Therapy Program
A program that has incorporated RSVP to provide students with individualized preparation for the Respiratory Therapy Technician Certification Examination administered by the National Board for Respiratory Therapy

Documents Available Upon Request

RSVP — Conceptual Framework for Course Planning
This pamphlet emphasizes the need for engaging in systematic course planning for RSVP, and it presents the variations in instruction that are possible when students' performance and characteristics are con-

sidered together. The focus is on the process of course planning rather than on the course content.

RSVP — A Faculty/Computer Partnership

This pamphlet discusses the philosophical positions of the proponents and opponents of the use of computers in higher education, the place of computer-based instruction in colleges of higher learning, and the faculty/computer partnership achieved through RSVP.

RSVP — Human Reflections

This pamphlet presents testimonies from students, faculty, and administrators who have been exposed to RSVP.

RSVP — Instructional Capabilities (Price $7.00)*

This guide illustrates the various implementation possibilities of the system from the perspective of the faculty. Illustrations include different disciplines and questions in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

RSVP — A Guide for Implementation (Price $25.00)*

This guide for implementing RSVP is written with special attention to a novice in computer use. The various programs in the RSVP system and their functions and programming requirements are described. An illustrative course, "Learning by Doing," is included to take the user from the start to the finish of a course while working with RSVP.

RSVP Newsletter (Biannual)

This publication features articles by RSVP users who are involved in developing and implementing new projects.

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*Available for a 90-day free trial period. Contact Auxiliary Services, Miami-Dade Community College, 11011 S.W. 104th Street, Miami, Florida 33176, (305) 596-1364.

Computer-Enhanced Academic Alert and Advisement System

This paper presented at the 1979 CAUSE conference discusses the College-wide advisement system used at Miami-Dade to alert 45,000 credit students about their progress and attendance midway into every major term.

Promises to Keep...Academic Alert and Advisement

This paper discusses the same system presented in #7 above.

Research Report on the "RSVP Feedback Program for Individualized Analysis of Writing"

This document presents the findings of an experimental study of the program involving students' writing assignments from selected classes and labs in five community colleges including Miami-Dade.

Published Articles

For more information on RSVP, readers also can refer to the published articles that are listed below.

Shostak, R., "Computers and Teaching English: Bits 'N' Pieces." *The Computing Teacher*, Vol. VIII, No. 6, pp. 56-57.

Anandam, K., Eisel, E., Kotler L., "Effectiveness of a Computer-Based Feedback System

for Writing." *Journal of Computer-Based Instruction*, VI (May 1980), 125-133.

Clevenger, J. V., "Helping Individual Students." *Journal of Chemical Education*, LVII (May 1980), 357-359.

Kelly, J. T., and Anandam, K., "Instruction at a Distance Is Personalized Through Technology." *Journal of Personalized Instruction*, III (Fall 1978), 162-164.

Pallow, W., "The Mathematics Learning Center: A Computer-Managed Multimedia Program." *The Mathematics Teacher*, November 1980, p. 627.

Kelly, J. T. and Anandam, K., "RSVP — An Invitation to Individualize Instruction." *Community and Junior College Journal*, March 1978, pp. 24-26

Kotler, L. and Anandam, K., "Teacher-Computer Partnership in the Teaching of Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, in press

Waniewicz, I., "The TV Ontario Academy: the Use of Television Broadcasting and Computer-Managed Learning for Adults." *Educational Broadcasting Journal*, XIV (June 1981), 78-81.

Concluding Comments

The primary purpose of this mongraph was to share with others the Miami-Dade experiences with RSVP. The program has come a long way. But there is a long way to go in adequately utilizing the exploding communication technologies for the enhancement of learning. Getting prepared for and being involved in the computer technologies has been a slow process. The people who have been touched by RSVP have shown a deep commitment to use it in their own unique ways and to continually expand their sophistication in individualizing instruction and advisement.

The RSVP system of instruction has emerged as an entity in the institution and is being recognized as an integral part of the instructional support. The years of experience with RSVP since 1971 have not escaped the fear of the unknown or the cry against impersonalization. But fortunately — for the students, faculty, and administrators alike — those responses have not surfaced so much as the excitement of the innovative possibilities that are made available through this computer-based instructional management system.

Even now, those involved are looking to the future and the inevitable environment of microcomputers for education. Accordingly, Miami-

Dade is utilizing all the experiences with RSVP and creating new ideas for the development of a microcomputer-based system called CAMELOT.

The CAMELOT system will be capable of using all current RSVP applications, as well as contain several new features that will operate on a stand-alone microcomputer. This project is supported by an Exxon Education Foundation grant, contributions from four community colleges in the United States, and two other institutions, one in Canada and the other in Northern Ireland.

People often ask, "What is the pay-off for Miami-Dade in using RSVP? Is retention improved? Are grades improved?" There is no way to answer these questions in the affirmative with any degree of certainty, and clearly not with hard-core data except in a few cases. Yet, it can be said for certain that the intangibles can be counted on in the long run to make a difference — intangibles such as collaborative work, quality-oriented courseware development, and review and refinement processes. In short, faculty development and faculty satisfaction have occurred.

To help move along with only these intangibles are our students. RSVP is a decisive winner with students in each and every application. Undoubtedly, it is the students' satisfaction that attracts faculty to RSVP. It is gratifying that RSVP serves the role of "cloning" the faculty (as one instructor put it) so that their students receive the individual attention they deserve.

The uses of RSVP at Miami-Dade are as varied as the faculty and advisors using it. In all the work with RSVP, there has been emphasis on the educational aspects of curriculum design and assessment, elevating the human activities above the computer capabilities and thereby producing quality instructional programs for students. Herein lies the strength of RSVP: its potentials for faculty development, tangential and indirect as compared with the planned and direct outcomes of individualized learning, will in the long run make a substantial contribution to the quality of higher education and perhaps will be sustained and continued long after RSVP.

References

Richard L. Ferguson, "Computer Assistance for Individualizing Instruction," *Computers and Automation*, March 1970, pp. 27-29.

John G. Kemeny, *Man and the Computer*, Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers, 1972, p. 146.

Roger E. Levien, *The Emerging Technology*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Publishers, 1972, p. xix.

Michael Serena and Ronald B. Newman, "Review of Literature on Improvement of Writing," Miami-Dade Community College, 1977 (Unpublished).